

GREAT PLAINS INSTITUTE
OF READING AND WRITING

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA LINCOLN

2006-07 FALL REPORT

NEBRASKA READING FIRST

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Round two schools have added to student diversity in Reading First
- Second round schools start at a similar point as did first round schools two years ago and enjoy a significant advantage in first grade only
- First round schools students performed better than second round schools in all grades, showing the cumulative effect of two years of Reading First
- The students participating in Reading First experience significant loss of skill over the summer
- There is no clear pattern showing that the achievement gap is narrowing
- Teacher instructional focus is adjusting to Reading First demands at all grade levels

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Add a fall assessment in vocabulary and comprehension to help schools focus their instruction
- The State leadership team should help round two schools adjust their instruction as quickly as possible
- Encourage schools and communities to take summer reading practice seriously with a special emphasis on low students and students that are new to the school/ district

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OVERVIEW

The Fall Report provides an overview of student achievement and instructional practices within Reading First schools in Nebraska. Comparisons in student achievement are made over the first three years of Reading First implementation as well as between Round I and Round II schools. Twenty two schools are continuing their participation in the program and eight new schools have joined (Round II).

In the report, each section begins with a comparison of the baseline assessments to previous years; a between cohorts comparison. This comparison will show whether the starting point of Reading First schools improves each year. A second comparison focuses on following student achievement from spring 2005-6 school year to fall of 2006-7. This within cohort comparison shows the sustainability of last year's gains and the effects of summer reading setback. Last we compare the status of Round I and Round II schools in overall achievement in each grade level.

STUDENT POPULATION

Student characteristics in 2006-7 are somewhat different compared to the previous year (see table 1). The number of English language learners has doubled. Significant increases were noted in the number of African American and Hispanic students. There was also a significant increase in number of disadvantaged students.

Table 1: Student demographics in Reading First schools from the first, second, and third year and a comparison between round I and round II.

	Reading First Schools Only					
	Nebraska*	Three year comparison			Round comparison	
	2005-6	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	Round I	Round II
English learners	6.17%	3.40%	3.50%	7.00%	4.69%	14.21%
Special Education	--	5.60%	7.20%	6.50%	7.25%	4.27%
F/RL Participant	34.66%	33.10%	43.00%	50.20%	48.04%	57.11%
African American	7.57%	21.70%	20.80%	24.40%	23.30%	27.72%
Hispanic	11.48%	12.80%	14.10%	17.60%	14.48%	27.46%
Native American	1.65%	2.30%	2.10%	2.20%	2.59%	1.13%
White	77.48%	62.10%	62.00%	55.10%	58.96%	47.72%

* Retrieved from Nebraska Department of Education Report Card.

Most of these increases can be explained through the addition of the eight new schools to the Nebraska Reading First. Round II schools have a much higher percentage of English Language Learners, disadvantaged, African American and Hispanic students with a much lower percentage of white students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten students are assessed each fall in Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) and Letter Naming Fluency (LNF). Figure 1 compares the scores on these measures in the fall across the first three years of Reading First implementation. The figure shows slight increases each year in baseline scores. This may be the result of teacher's becoming more adept at administering the assessments.

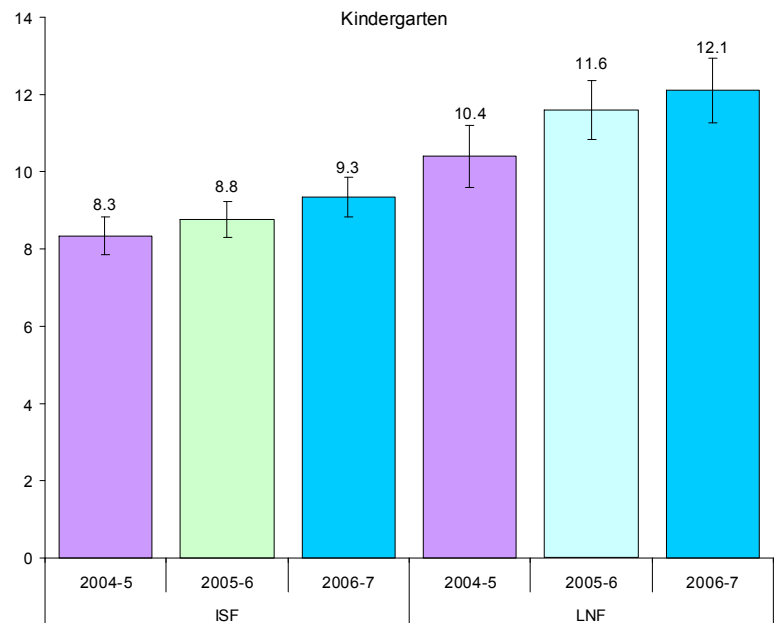


Figure 1: comparison of fall kindergarten scores across three years.

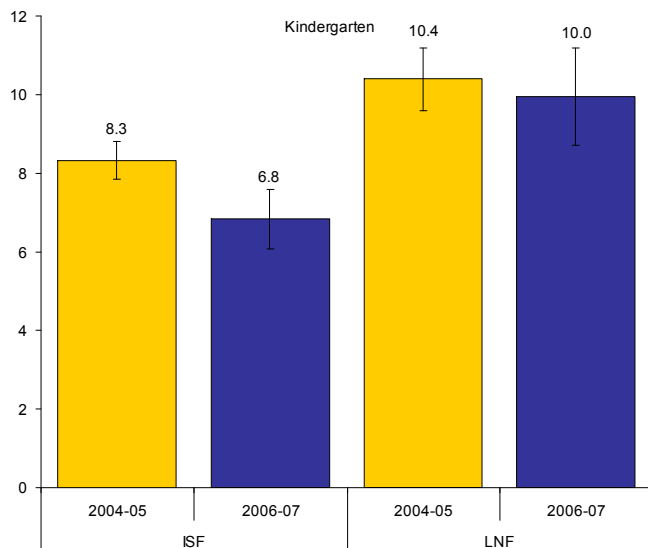


Figure 2: comparison of entry point scores between round I and round II schools

Figure 2 is a comparison of fall scores for Round I and Round II schools in kindergarten on measures of Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) and Letter Naming Fluency (LNF). A comparison of Round I and Round II schools is being made because it is important to monitor progress on the basis of entry performance. Round I students began the 2004-05 school year somewhat higher in basic phonemic awareness (ISF)

than Round II students this year. Given these differences it is important that Round II kindergarten classrooms allocate adequate time to instruction in this area in order to compensate for the low starting point. In letter knowledge (LNF), an important predictor of future reading success, there were no significant differences between Round I and Round II schools.

Figure 3 summarizes kindergarten baseline performance in Round I and Round II schools using letter knowledge (LNF) as the criteria. According to these results nearly 60% of kindergarteners in Round II schools are in the at-risk and some-risk categories compared to 50% of Round I schools. Both Round I and II kindergarten classrooms are lagging behind the national averages and need to give ample attention to instruction in early literacy skills.

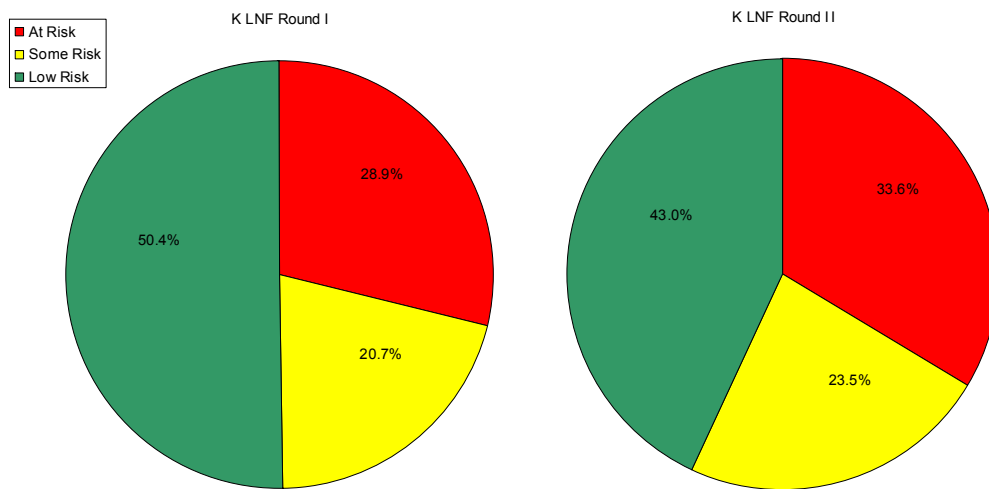


Figure 3: kindergarten risk level in LNF for round I and round II.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students are assessed each fall in Letter Naming Fluency (LNF),

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF),

and Non-Word Fluency (NWF). Figure

4 compares baseline scores on these

measures in the fall across the first three

years of Reading First implementation.

Baseline achievement is higher each year

with the greatest increases between

years one and two of implementation

and only modest gains between years

two and three. These results are

consistent across all three measures and

indicate a trend showing that not all kindergarten gains are translated into first grade.

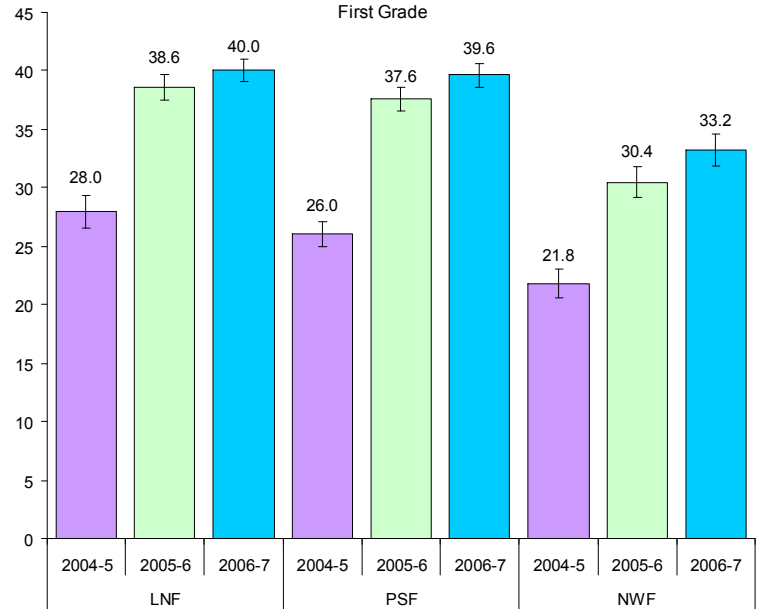


Figure 4: comparison of fall first grade scores across three years.

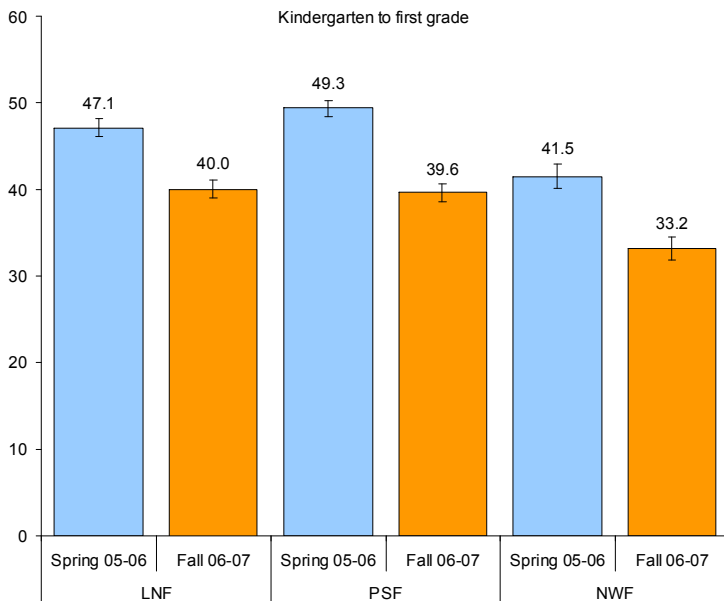


Figure 5: comparison of spring 05-06 scores with fall 06-07 scores within cohort.

As shown in Figure 5 first grade students in round I schools experienced fairly significant summer loss across all measures. These setbacks are worthy of attention as they clearly indicate a lack of reading practice during the summer months.

Figure 6 is a comparison of baseline first grade scores for Round I and Round II schools in the first year of implementation. Round II students in first grade are beginning Reading First implementation at considerably higher performance on all measures compared to Round I students in 2004-05.

Figure 7 summarizes first grade performance by Round I and Round II as related to level of risk according to PSF results. According to these results over 20% of first graders in Round II schools are at-risk compared to 6.4% of Round I

schools. The low level of at-risk Round I students clearly shows the benefit of Reading First implementation in kindergarten. Round II classrooms need to focus on improvements in the area of phonemic segmentation as this skill is vital to reading growth.

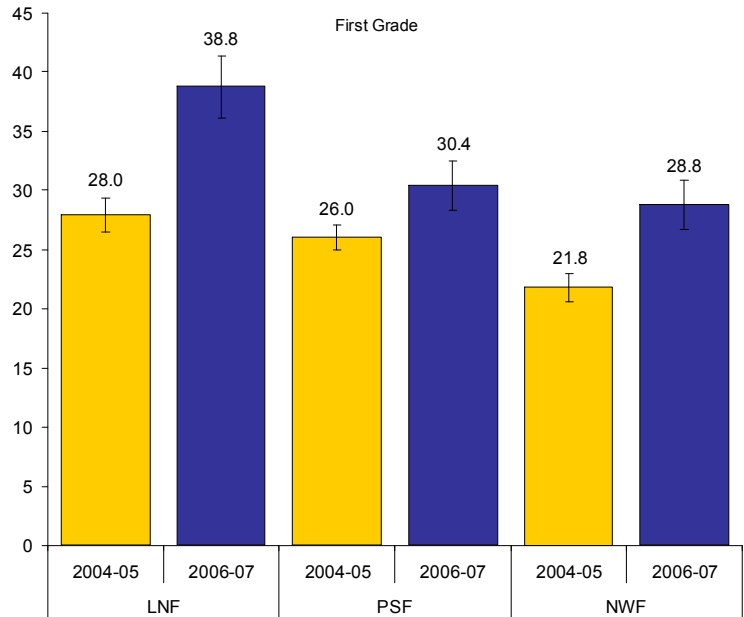


Figure 6: comparison of entry point scores between round I and round II schools

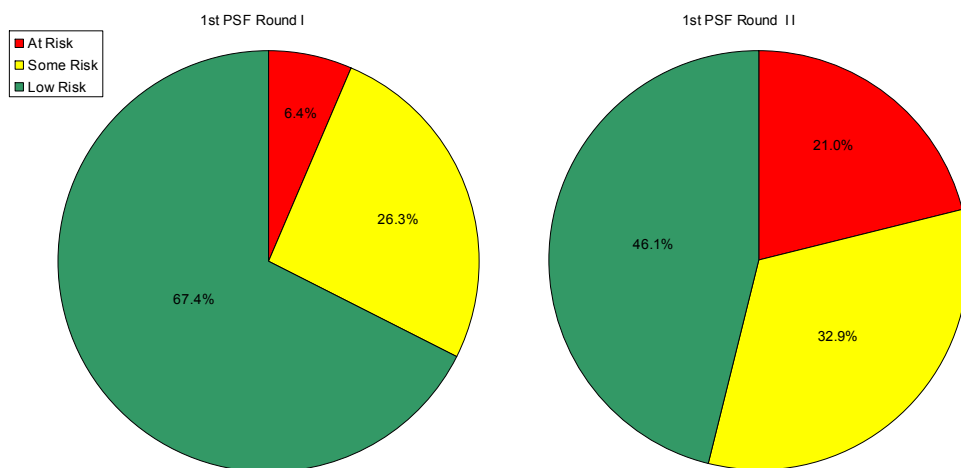


Figure 7: first grade risk level in PSF for round I and round II.

SECOND GRADE

Second grade students are assessed each fall in Non-Word Fluency (NWF) and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Figure 8

compares baseline scores on these measures across the first three years of Reading First implementation. There is a steady increase in baseline scores in NWF, but only minimal increases in ORF. The ORF results reflect the difficulty in increasing oral reading fluency rates at the end of first grade.

The growth in decoding is encouraging as this is the main skill focus in first grade.

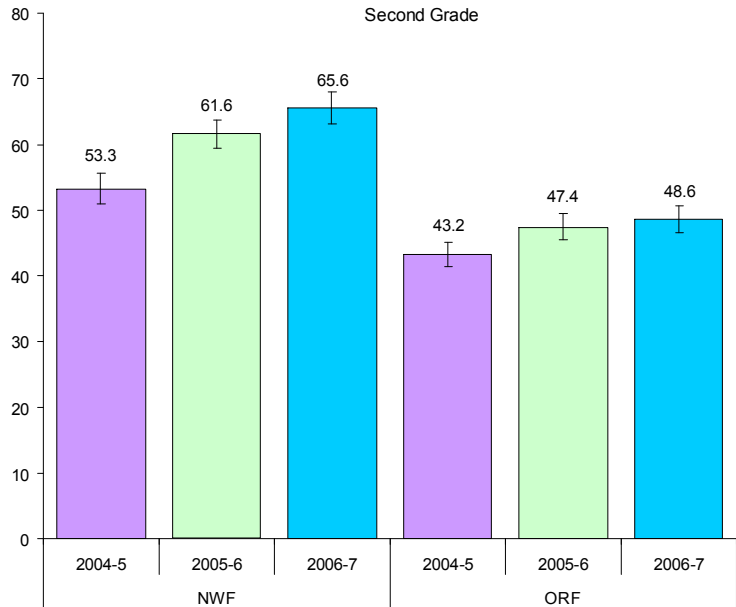


Figure 8: comparison of fall second grade scores across three years.

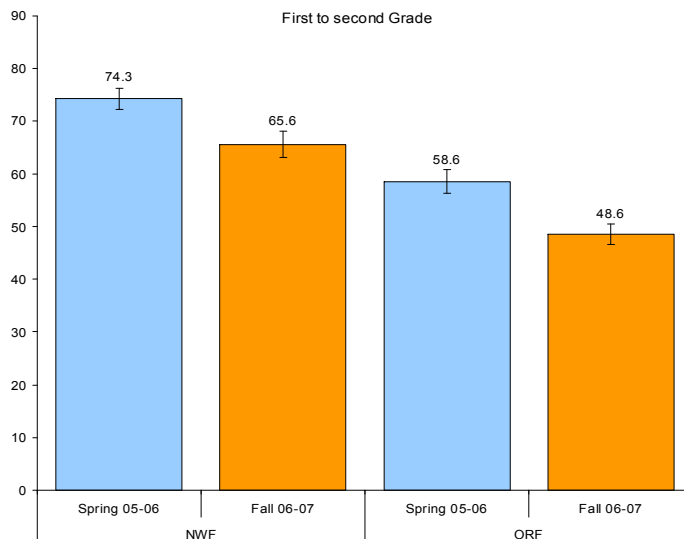


Figure 9: comparison of spring 05-06 scores with fall 06-07 scores within cohort.

As shown in Figure 9 second grade students experienced noticeable summer loss on measures of NWF (-9 words) and oral fluency (-10 words). These setbacks require attention as they clearly indicate a lack of reading practice during the summer months.

Figure 10 is a comparison of second grade scores for Round I and Round II schools during the fall of their first year of implementation in NWF and ORF. Round II students in second grade are beginning Reading First implementation somewhat higher on both measures compared to Round I students in 2004-05.

Figure 11 summarizes second grade performance by Round I and Round II in oral reading fluency (ORF). According to these results approximately one-third of second

graders in Round II schools are at-risk compared to one-fifth of Round I

schools. However, in both Round I and Round II schools more than half of the students fall into either the at-risk or some risk categories lagging behind national averages. These results clearly show the need for oral reading fluency instruction and oral reading practice across all Nebraska Reading First schools.

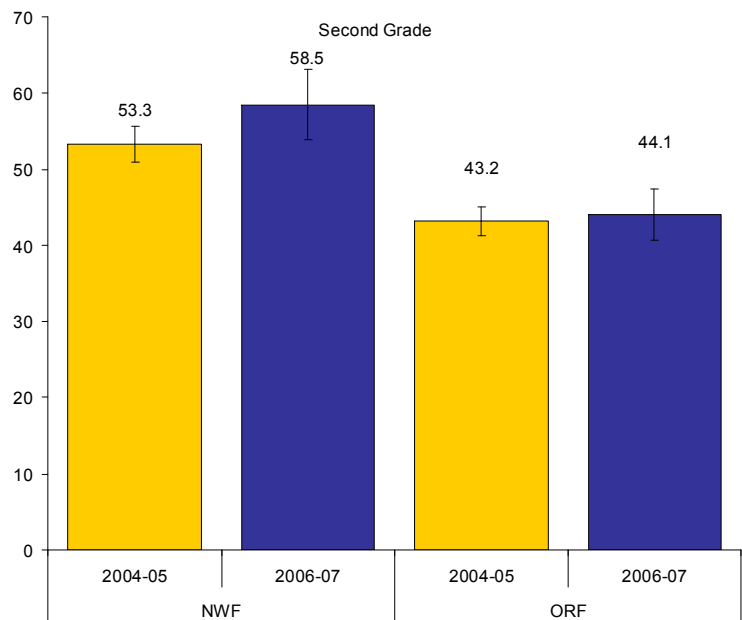


Figure 10: comparison of entry point scores between round I and round II schools

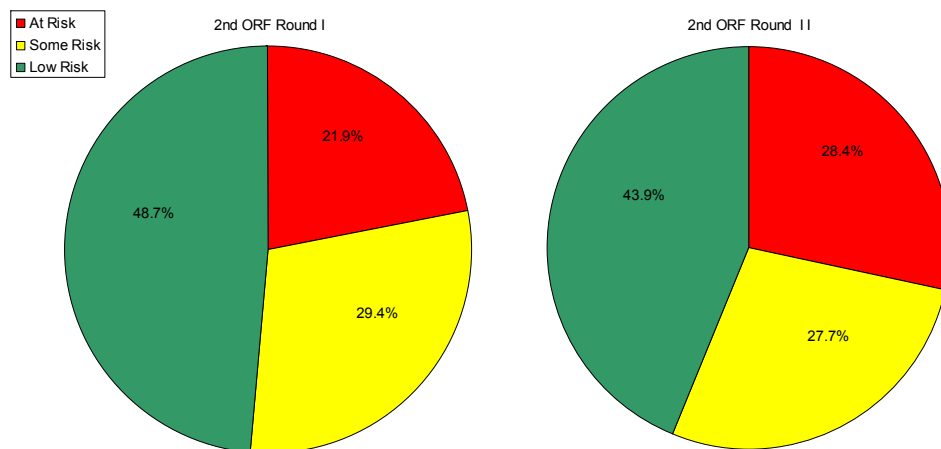


Figure 11: second grade risk level in ORF for round I and round II.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students are assessed each fall in Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Figure 12 compares baseline scores on this measure in the fall across the first three years of Reading First implementation. There is a steady increase in baseline scores in oral reading fluency (ORF). The increases are likely the result of improving second grade instruction in this area. Though the baseline increases are encouraging, they are not very big (3.3 words per minute) suggesting that we still face challenges in the area of oral reading fluency.

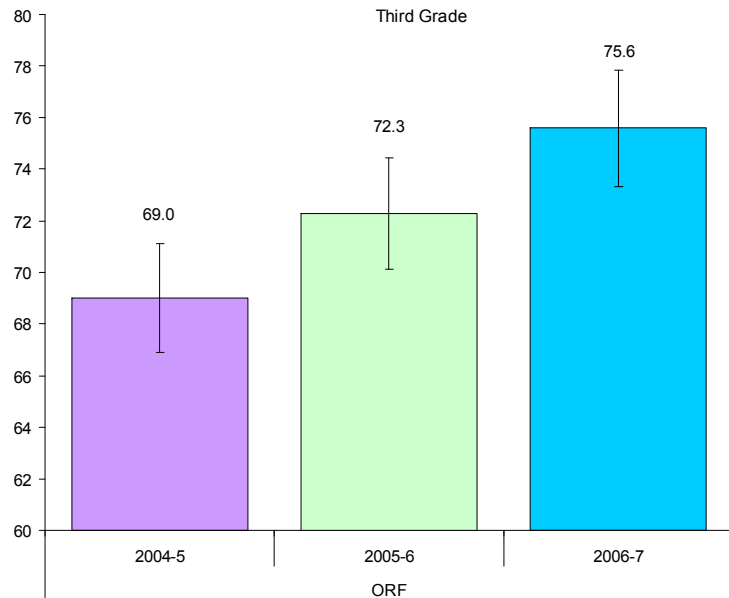


Figure 12: comparison of fall third grade scores across three years.

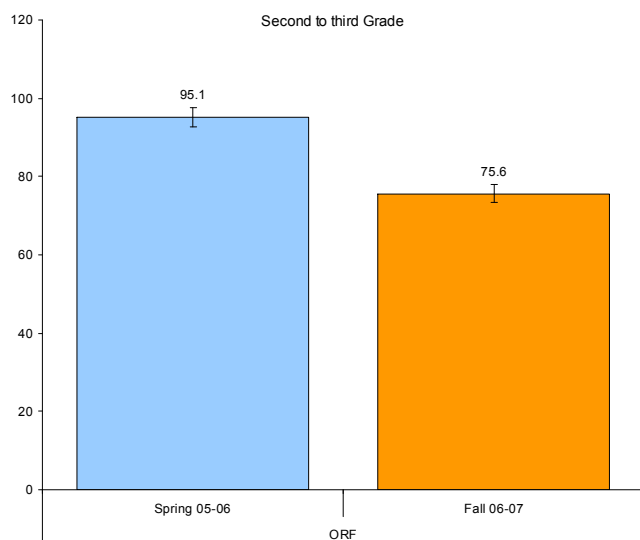


Figure 13: comparison of spring 05-06 scores with fall 06-07 scores within cohort.

As shown in Figure 13 third grade students experienced noticeable summer loss in ORF of approximately 20 words per minute. Decreases in performance following the extended time away from school have been found consistently across grade levels.

Figure 14 is a comparison of baseline third grade performance for Round I and Round II schools. Round II students in third grade are beginning Reading First implementation at virtually the same level compared to Round I students in 2004-05.

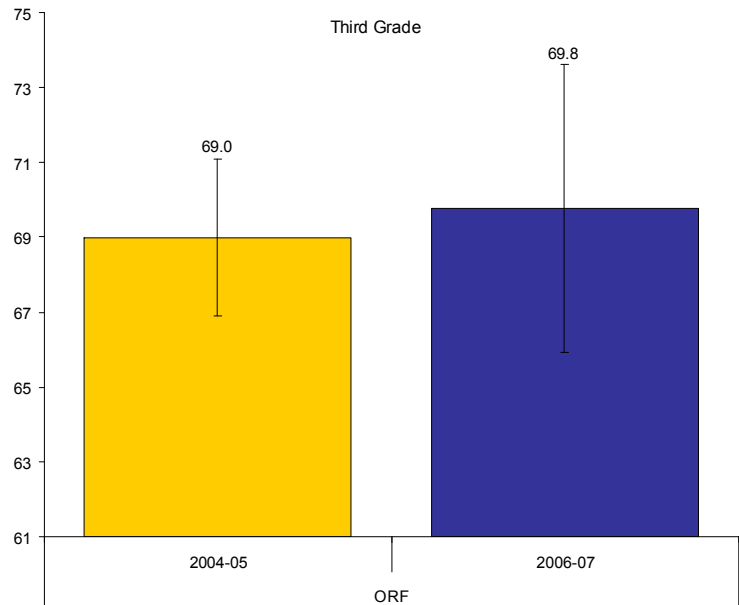


Figure 14: comparison of entry point scores between round I and round II schools

fluency. According to these results just nearly one-third of third graders in Round II schools are at-risk compared to one-fourth of Round I schools. However, in both Round I and Round II schools more than half of the students fall into either the at-risk or some risk categories. These results clearly show the need for oral reading fluency instruction and oral reading practice across all Nebraska Reading First schools.

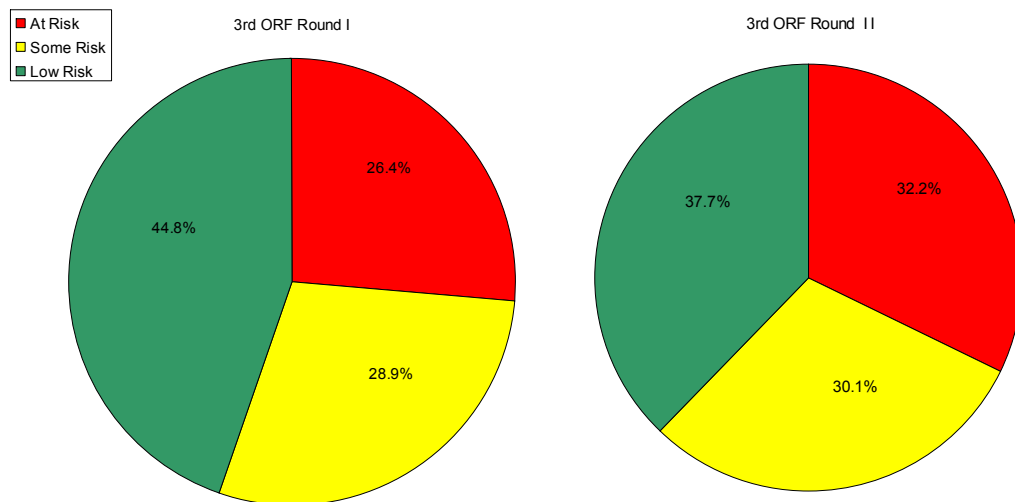


Figure 15: third grade risk level in ORF for round I and round II.

Student Achievement by group

For this section data was analyzed by student category—ELL, SPED, F/RL, and ethnicity. Each category is represented by a separate figure for Round I and Round II. For kindergarten through third grade the tests used for this comparison were LNF, PSF, ORF, and ORF respectively.

Special Education

The comparison of Special Education students' achievement in Round I schools shows the most substantial gap exists in second grade with slightly smaller gaps in first and third grades (figure 16). Round II schools present interesting results as the children receiving special education services are outperforming general education peers in kindergarten and are performing as well as peers in first grade. The gaps then dramatically widen in second and third grade.

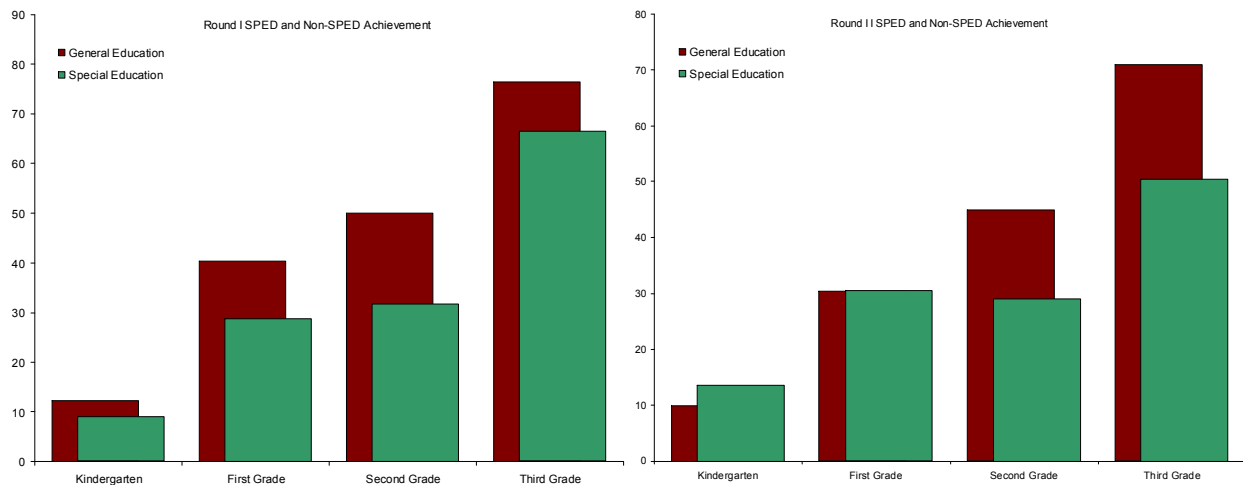


Figure 16: comparison between the special education and the general education populations in round I and II scores in fall 2006-7 by grade.

English Language Learners

A comparison between English Only students and English Learners (figure 17) show that English Only students are outperforming ELL students in Round I and Round II schools across all grade levels with the exception of kindergarten students in Round II schools.

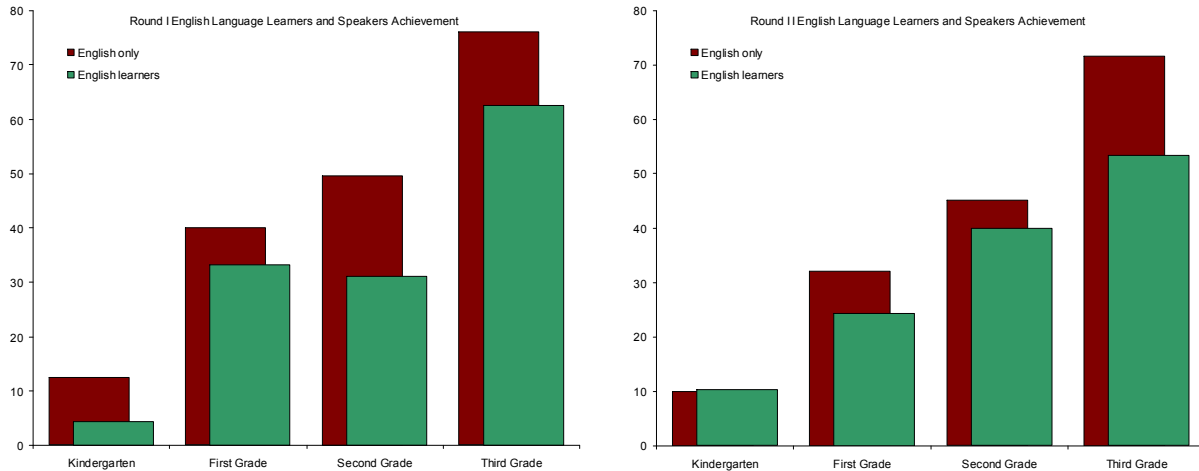


Figure 17: comparison between the English learners and the English speakers populations in round I and II scores in fall 2006-7 by grade.

Free/Reduced Lunch

The comparison between those participating in F/RL programs and non-F/RL students (figure 18) in Round I schools shows a small gap in kindergarten, no gap in first grade and then widening gaps in second and third grades. In Round II schools kindergarteners receiving F/RL are outperforming non-F/RL students. In first through third grades non-F/RL students are outperforming students receiving F/RL with the most substantial gaps in third grade.

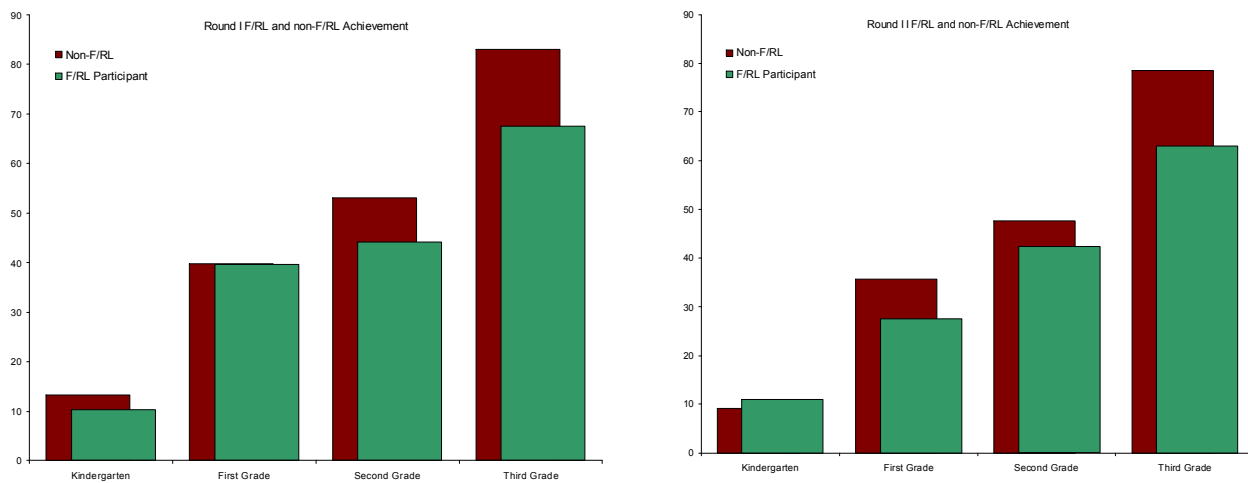


Figure 18: comparison between the Free/Reduced Lunch eligible population and the non-F/RL populations in round I and II scores in fall 2006-7 by grade.

Ethnicity

The comparison by student ethnicity (figure 19) was made using mean scores for minorities compared to the mean for White Non-Hispanic group. In Round I schools, minority students are performing at nearly the same level as White Non-Hispanics in kindergarten and first grade with widening gaps in second and third grades. In Round II schools White Non-Hispanic students are outperforming minority students across grade levels. First grade students in Round II schools have a much wider gap than in Round I schools with narrower gaps in second and third grades.

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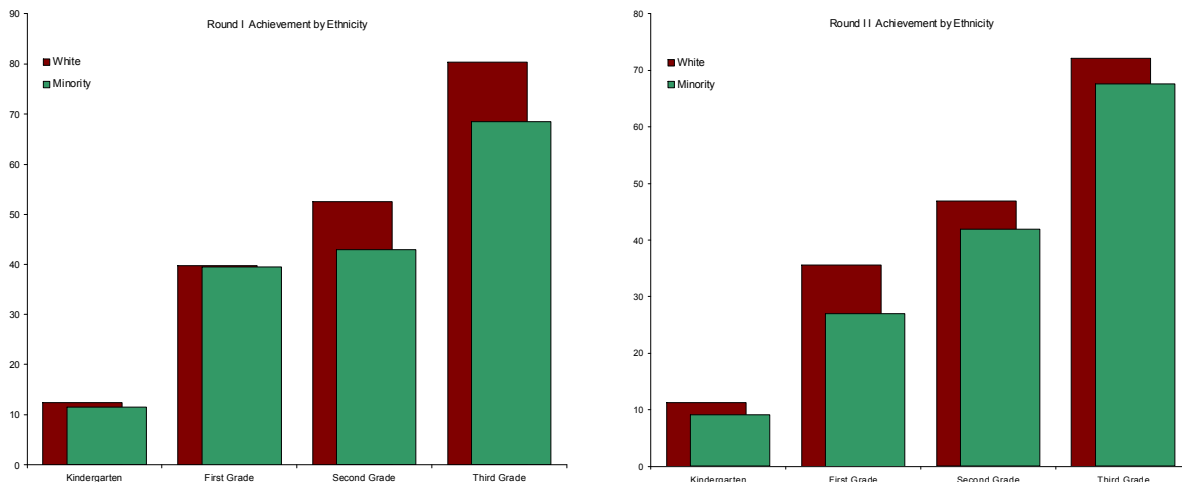


Figure 19: comparison between minority and white only populations in round I and II scores in fall 2006-7 by grade.

TEACHER LOGS

During the fall teachers in Nebraska Reading First schools completed teacher logs which reports major and minor focus of specific areas of literacy instruction. The logs asked teachers to indicate the level of focus that their instruction gave to phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These logs provide valuable insight into actual daily classroom practices by teachers in these schools in addition to our observations. The following figure shows how teachers in the different grades used their time to address different aspects of reading instruction (figure 20). As expected teachers in the higher grades focus less on decoding and phonemic awareness and spend a lot more time on reading fluency and comprehension.

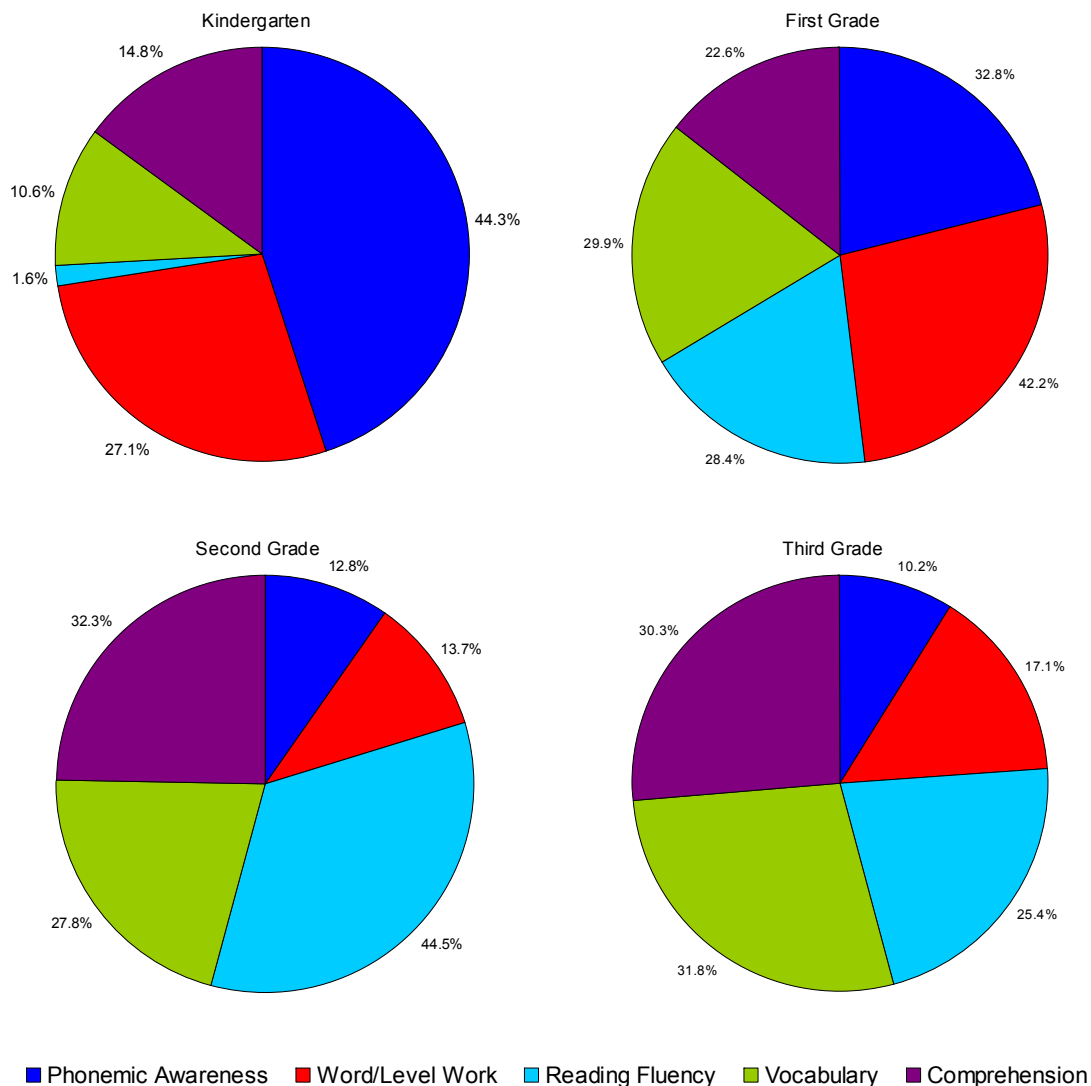


Figure 20: Use of reading instruction time by grade.

Phonemic awareness

Teachers in Nebraska Reading First schools focused on a variety of domains in phonemic awareness. As shown in figure 21, emphasis on phonemic awareness instruction is reduced as grade level increases. Teachers in kindergarten classrooms reported the heaviest emphasis on identification of lower/uppercase letters as would be expected. Nearly half of these teachers used identification and generation of rhyming words and saying sounds in one syllable words as a part of their instruction in phonemic awareness. First grade teachers placed a low emphasis on letter identification and higher levels of emphasis on rhyming words, saying sounds in one syllable words, and segmenting/blending real words. Second and third grade teachers reported minimal (20% or less) emphasis on phonemic awareness instruction. This is a natural shift from emphasis on letter/word level work to vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

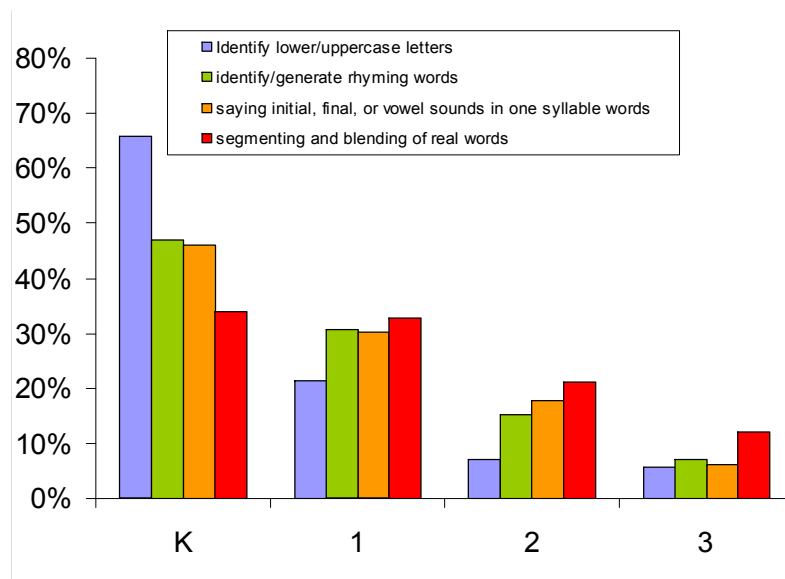


Figure 21: teacher log- phonemic awareness instruction.

Word Level Work/Phonics

The teachers reported using a variety of word level work/phonics instruction. It would be expected levels to see diminished levels of word level work as grade levels increase, but teachers in kindergarten, first, and second grades reported similar levels of word level work (see figure 22). Less than 35% of kindergarten and first grade teachers reported an emphasis on word level work which is quite low for these grade levels. Second and third grade teachers reported a lower emphasis on word level work which would be expected.

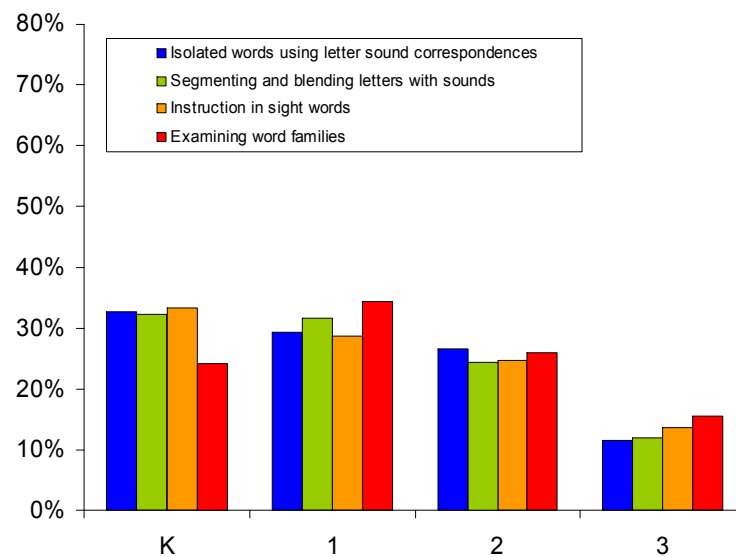


Figure 22: teacher log- word level works/phonics instruction

Fluency

Teacher logs indicate that fluency instruction is being conducted across grade levels. As shown in figure 23, the strategies employed by teachers in Nebraska Reading First schools appear to be fairly focused, consistent and balanced. Ideally all grade levels would increase their level of daily independent reading practice. Kindergarten and first grade teachers reported using repeated readings as the primary means of fluency practice with slightly lower emphasis on paired reading and independent reading practice. Second and third grade teachers on the other hand report a higher emphasis on independent reading practice and a lower emphasis on paired reading and repeated reading. This represents an appropriate shift in fluency practice across grade levels.

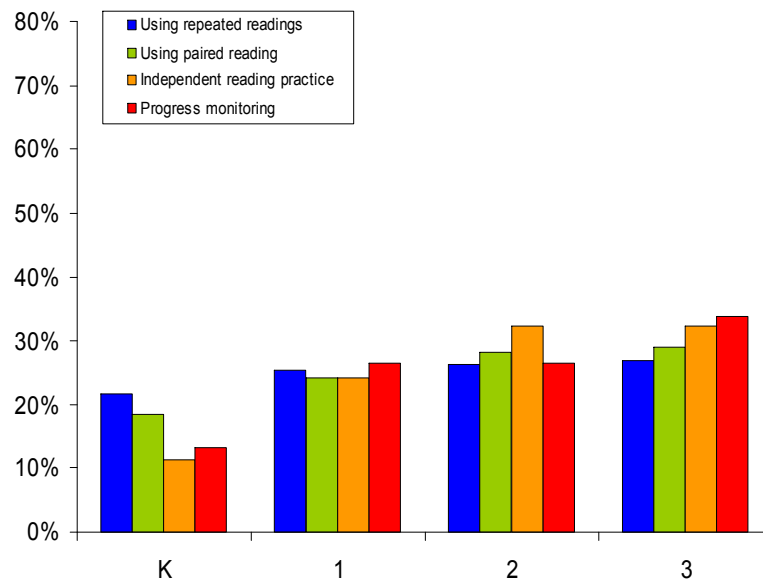


Figure 23: teacher log- fluency instruction

Vocabulary

Table 2 shows the percentages of teachers who focused on specific areas of vocabulary instruction. In general it appears that teachers are making appropriate adjustments in their vocabulary instruction as grade levels increase. Less than 30% of teachers reported pre-teaching vocabulary which is quite low. Students greatly benefit from experience with important words prior to reading. Additionally, there appears to be an overemphasis on dictionary use in second and third grades. Dictionary use has not been found to be an effective method of vocabulary instruction as multiple meanings and multiple forms does not help clarify or confirm word meanings. On a positive note teachers are reporting a higher emphasis on semantic mapping as compared to last year. Semantic mapping enables students to make connections between terms through graphical representation.

Table 2: Teacher Logs—Vocabulary Instruction.

	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
Identifying and using meanings associated with common prefixes, suffixes	12%	16%	33%	38%
Identifying and using antonyms or synonyms	9%	26%	30%	35%
Identifying and using compound	10%	18%	47%	25%
Pre-teaching vocabulary	25%	27%	23%	25%
Using a dictionary to learn and confirm word meanings	6%	6%	39%	50%
Using context to figure out words meaning	16%	23%	29%	32%
Using semantic mapping	8%	21%	46%	25%

Comprehension Instruction

Emphasis on reading comprehension grows in later grades. Figure 24 shows the emphasis teachers placed on specific areas of comprehension instruction. Teachers across grade levels are using a good mix of comprehension strategies. The low emphasis on activation of prior knowledge (less than 30% across grade levels) needs attention. Activating prior knowledge and making personal connections greatly benefits students' ability to comprehend new material. The use of graphic organizers has increased greatly since last year and appears to be used to the greatest extent in second and third grades.

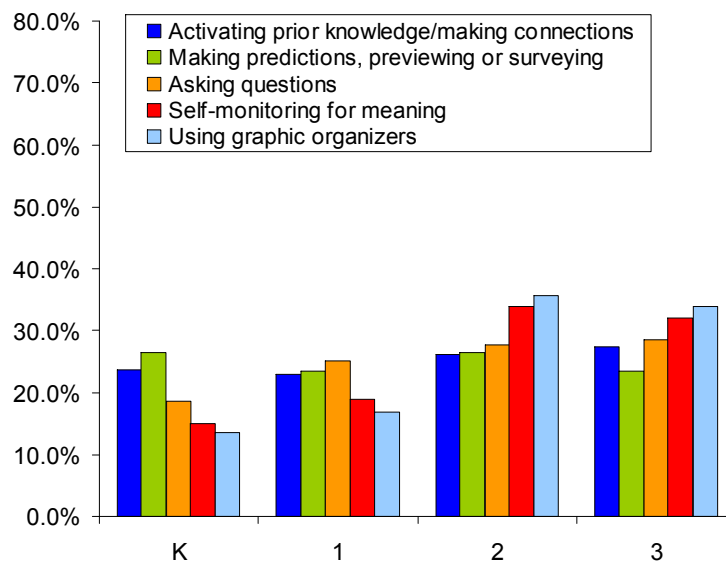


Figure 24: teacher log- comprehension instruction